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Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba

Culture of peace

Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development

Assistance in mine clearance

Fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Elimination of coercive economic measures as a means of political and economic compulsion

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Consolidation of the regime established by the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (Treaty of Tlatelolco)

Macroeconomic policy questions

Sustainable development and international economic cooperation

Environment and sustainable development

Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family

International drug control

Elimination of racism and racial discrimination

Human rights questions

Measures to eliminate international terrorism

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Letter dated 9 October 1998 from the Permanent Representative of Panama to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

In my capacity as coordinator of the Rio Group in New York, I have the honour to attach herewith the Panama City Declaration and the Declaration of Heads of State and Government adopted at the Twelfth Summit of the Rio Group, which was held in Panama on 4 and 5 September 1998 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the fifty-third session of the General Assembly under agenda items 29, 31, 37, 42, 46, 51, 71, 77, 91, 93, 94, 100, 102, 108, 110 and 155.

(*Signed*) Aquilino **Boyd**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

Annex

Declarations adopted at the Twelfth Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Rio Group, held in Panama City on 4 and 5 September 1998

Panama City Declaration

1. We, the heads of State and Government of the States members of the Permanent Mechanism for Consultation and Concerted Political Action (Rio Group), have gathered in Panama City on 4 and 5 September 1998 to reaffirm, based upon our shared principles and values, which are aimed at strengthening and defending peace and representative democracy and at forging a joint programme for economic and social development, the commitment of our Governments to strengthen the Rio Group as the preferred and most representative forum in the region for dialogue and for the analysis and exchange of experiences and opinions on the important issues on the agenda of this meeting.

2. Globalization, economic liberalization, the significant increase in intraregional trade, the emergence of economic integration arrangements and their respective forums for political consultation at the subregional level, the disappearance of bipolarity and the consolidation of democracy in the continent are all signposts that indicate the way forward to a strengthening of the framework for the process of consultation and integration in which our countries are involved.

3. We recall the commitment given at the Eighth Summit and renew our pledge to ensure that our political dialogue encompasses all aspects of our relations.

4. We remain convinced that the close political and economic ties that exist between the countries of the region, the striking similarity of our histories and cultures and the cooperation and solidarity that unite us are valuable common assets that will help us to strengthen our Latin American community of nations.

5. The challenges we face as the century draws to a close require us to continue to strengthen our Mechanism to enable us to take effective action in the face of our common challenges. Where necessary, we shall therefore review the procedures of the Mechanism, while at the same time maintaining its flexible and informal character and its consensus-based working method.

Democracy and international peace and security

6. We reiterate that the preservation of democratic values in the region is one of the main objectives of the Permanent Mechanism for Consultation and Concerted Political Action. This commitment is based on our conviction that the effectiveness of democratic institutions and promotion of economic and social development are vital to the strengthening of peace and security in the hemisphere and to the promotion of cooperation between States.

7. We are convinced that the implementation of measures to promote trust and security in the hemisphere will over time encourage cooperation in ensuring the transparency of defence policies and that a forward-looking and holistic approach will help to strengthen the institutions and instruments that comprise the system of security in our hemisphere.

8. We reiterate our firm intention to work steadfastly towards the effective limitation of conventional weapons in the region, which will permit us to increase the resources allocated for the economic and social development of our peoples. We therefore support the initiative to convene the ad hoc working group of the Rio Group on the limitation of

conventional weapons so that a recommendation on this subject may be considered at our Thirteenth Summit.

9. We reiterate our support for the mandate contained in the Plan of Action adopted by the Second Summit of the Americas concerning the need to strengthen the Committee on Hemispheric Security of the Organization of American States (OAS) and to organize, early in the next decade, a special conference on security under the auspices of OAS.

10. Latin America and the Caribbean have made significant progress towards the transformation of the region into a zone of peace. In this connection, we welcome the recent political declaration of the countries members of the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR), Bolivia and Chile as a zone of peace, which was made at the fourteenth meeting of the Common Market Council, held on 24 July 1998 in Ushuaia, Argentina. We stress the importance of this initiative, which helps to strengthen Latin America as a region united by cooperation in which the existence of a climate of peace and security creates a favourable environment for economic prosperity.

11. We also underscore the special contribution to international peace and security made by the Treaty of Tlatelolco, the Treaty Concerning the Permanent Neutrality and Operation of the Panama Canal, the Framework Treaty on Democratic Security in Central America, the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives and Other Related Materials, as well as the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. We urge those countries which have not yet done so to ratify or accede to the above-mentioned instruments at the earliest possible opportunity.

12. We take note of the initiative of the Government of Bolivia aimed at the establishment of a centre for the prevention of conflicts and the promotion of confidence-building measures.

13. We urge the international community to take immediate steps to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. We reiterate our vigorous condemnation of nuclear-weapons testing and our deep concern over the setback which such tests represent for the achievement of the goal of a complete ban on nuclear tests and the non-proliferation of this type of weapons.

14. In this connection, we urge those countries which have not yet done so to ratify or accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and call upon all States to strictly abide by the provisions of these two Treaties. Likewise, we urge States to accede to other international instruments, such as the Joint Declaration on the Complete Prohibition of Chemical and Biological Weapons (Mendoza Accord), the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction and the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction.

Human rights

15. In the year that marks the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and of the American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man, we declare our belief that the values enshrined in those instruments are an inseparable part of the identity of our societies and reaffirm that strict respect for the rights provided therein constitutes a common standard to be observed by all peoples and all nations. Bearing in mind the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (1993 World Conference on Human Rights), we reiterate that the principles of the universality and indivisibility of human rights, democracy

and development are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. We shall therefore continue to promote joint efforts and cooperation with international organizations aimed at ensuring respect for all human rights, including the right to development.

16. To this end, we shall promote the signing and ratification of and accession to international human rights instruments as well as compliance with the provisions contained in those instruments to which we are parties.

17. We reiterate our deep concern for contemporary forms of racial discrimination, xenophobia and similar manifestations of intolerance and welcome the convening by the United Nations of a Conference to be held before the end of the year 2001 to consider these serious problems. We agree on the need to commit ourselves to take action to ensure respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and to prevent the application of cruel, inhuman or degrading punishment. We also agree on the importance of providing adequate protection for the most vulnerable groups in our societies, particularly ethnic and linguistic minorities, indigenous peoples, women, girls and boys and migrant workers and their families.

18. We stress the responsibility of the States of origin and of destination of migrants to strengthen their cooperation in immigration matters. In that connection, we urge the continued adoption by common agreement of measures to guarantee migrants the full enjoyment of their human rights together with social and economic well-being.

19. We reaffirm the commitment of our Governments to fully respect and comply with the provisions of the 1963 Vienna Convention on Consular Relations and call upon all countries to do likewise, particularly with regard to the right of nationals, regardless of their immigrant status, to communicate with a consular official of their State in case of arrest.

20. We reaffirm our commitment to the fundamental principles and universal norms of international humanitarian law.

Fight against poverty

21. We reaffirm our determination to overcome poverty, malnutrition, marginalization, lack of access to health services, and illiteracy through policies that lead to sustainable economic development in the medium and long term.

22. We pledge to continue the implementation of policies designed to help economic agents, and small and medium-sized enterprises in particular, to create productive jobs at decent wages and to promote education, training and the equipping of the labour force with skills as a key priority for the most vulnerable sectors of our populations.

23. Political and economic progress in our region must go hand in hand with a reduction in social inequalities. We are convinced that the transformation of the production system will be sustainable over time only to the extent that higher levels of equity can be achieved and that the design and implementation of joint projects and programmes in the field of education are necessary and essential instruments for the achievement of that goal.

Sustainable development

24. Poverty reduction is an integral aspect of sustainable development. The benefits of prosperity will be obtained only through policies that take account of the interrelationship between the human person and nature. Policies and programmes aimed at achieving sustainable development must be elaborated with broad participation by civil society, and special attention must be paid to the needs of minorities and of the disadvantaged with a view to facilitating their full participation in the development process.

25. We recognize that many positive results have been achieved at both the global and regional levels, but we remain profoundly concerned because the global trends towards sustainable development have had increasingly serious setbacks as a result of the steady deterioration of the global environment, including the negative trend towards pollution of the environment and degradation of natural resources.

26. We call upon the developed countries, cooperation agencies and international financial institutions to provide increased support to developing countries, especially in the area of the transfer of the technologies and financial resources needed for that purpose, and we urge them to comply with the provisions of chapter 33 of Agenda 21, concerning official development assistance and the use of innovative financing mechanisms.

27. We take note of the initiative of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) to promote recognition by the international community of the Caribbean Sea as a special area in the context of sustainable development.

28. We recognize that the concept of a new global human order is premised upon people-centred development and places the well-being and social equality of peoples at the centre of development at the national and international levels.

International trade and financial markets

29. The current process of globalization of the world economy has created new opportunities and challenges to the growth and social well-being of our countries. This new international environment is characterized by, *inter alia*, the rapid expansion in international trade and investments; trade liberalization and economic integration; institutional changes at the global level; harmonization of the rules of trade and investment; and the segmentation and internationalization of production systems.

30. Regional experiments with integration in Latin America and the Caribbean have been the response of our countries to the challenges of global competition. The liberalization of trade provided for in the various instruments and processes of integration has resulted in increased productivity and improved terms of participation in world trade.

31. The progress achieved by the Andean Group, the Group of Three, CARICOM, MERCOSUR, the Central American Common Market and other existing or proposed bilateral integration and trade liberalization arrangements in Latin America and the Caribbean represent our contribution to a more open and competitive world order that is consistent with the guidelines laid down by the World Trade Organization (WTO), which complement the multilateral trading system in a way that is mutually reinforcing. Progress towards integration must be viewed as a process of harmonious development of the region as a whole, which benefits all levels of the society, especially through the creation of more and better jobs.

32. We agree with the principles of open regionalism in the framework of the multilateral, free, non-discriminatory and open trading system that will favour the integration of our economies into the international economic system. In this context, we urge WTO member countries to fulfil the agreements reached during the Uruguay Round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) in order to improve the multilateral trading system, which will facilitate the flow of trade within the region and with other countries.

33. Trade and global markets are among our best allies in our efforts to create jobs, promote investment, increase national competitiveness and absorb know-how and technology. The export sector has become one of the most dynamic sectors of our economies

and a fundamental source of jobs. In some cases, export companies have seen a more rapid growth than those producing solely for the domestic market or those in the service sector.

34. The system adopted by over 120 nations in the framework of WTO promotes the holding of extensive, comprehensive negotiations as the best tool for attaining wider trade liberalization that will bring benefits to all members.

WTO also has the challenge of facing recent protectionist trends, especially agricultural subsidies or the use of countervailing duties to protect obsolete industries or to raise obstacles to the region's products on the pretext of ensuring better protection of the environment and labour rights.

35. We are concerned at the situation in the financial markets and its commercial and financial impact on the economies of the region, and we reaffirm the need to mobilize the relevant national and international mechanisms to deal with the situation.

36. We are pleased that talks are being held on a Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), and we reiterate our commitment to the completion of these talks by 2005 and to the attainment of definite goals by the end of this century.

37. We take note of the CARICOM proposal to establish a Regional Integration Fund within FTAA as a mechanism for correcting current imbalances among the more developed countries and those with smaller economies in the hemisphere.

Latin American and Caribbean – European Union Summit Meeting

38. We highlight the major role of the institutionalized dialogue between the Rio Group and the European Union in maintaining and reinforcing the excellent understanding that has prevailed between the two regions in the eight years since its inception.

39. The Summit of Heads of State and Government of Latin America and the Caribbean and the European Union, to be held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, jointly presided over in Latin America and the Caribbean by Brazil, the host country, and Mexico, the *pro tempore* secretariat, represents a significant opportunity to make a qualitative advance at the highest political level in the consolidation of a new, privileged biregional association for our mutual benefit.

We ratify our commitment to participate in the Summit, firmly convinced that it represents a unique occasion to encourage the accomplishment of important national and regional objectives and to consolidate a more balanced, peaceful and cooperative relationship with a view to the twenty-first century. We therefore support the work of the Preparatory Committee established for this purpose.

40. In the framework of the three main items on the agenda – political, economic/trade and cultural/educational/humanitarian matters – our Governments will make proposals based on the values and interests shared by both regions. In the political field, the Summit provides the opportunity to raise the level of dialogue and to share views on the enhancement of democracy and pluralism, the promotion of human rights and the fostering of sustainable development, together with other items on the international agenda of common interest, such as security and the fight against drug trafficking and related crimes.

41. We shall also promote an open, candid dialogue with European Union leaders on biregional economic relations, in order to give a decided thrust to ongoing trade negotiations and promote access to markets and investments. We shall also discuss other topics of special relevance, such as international financial flows and the coordination and convergence of economic integration arrangements in order to develop a common understanding of the significant processes and problems that are affecting our economies.

42. We shall especially encourage taking advantage of the huge cooperation potential in the two regions, particularly in the educational, cultural, technological and scientific fields, for the benefit of our people. The Summit is an exceptional opportunity to identify mechanisms to enable us to reach these objectives. As for women's issues, we shall also promote the exchange of experience and the definition of cooperation programmes that will allow us to move ahead in this field.

43. We agree to follow up the agreements and programmes ensuing from the Latin American and Caribbean-European Union Summit Meeting through the institutionalized dialogue between the Rio Group and the European Union and, where appropriate, through other existing institutionalized dialogues between the two regions.

Summit of the Americas

44. We are pleased to see the progress that has been made in Latin American and Caribbean integration. Integration should not be regarded as an instrument that is limited to promoting increased trade, but as a process of harmonious development for the benefit of all levels of society.

45. The Second Summit of the Americas, held in Santiago, Chile, was an event of fundamental importance in which the agenda of the Americas for the next few years was defined. Both the Political Declaration of the Heads of State and Government signed on that occasion and the Plan of Action are high-priority documents, marking a milestone in the hemispheric integration and cooperation process. We reiterate our firm commitment to the implementation and follow-up of the aforementioned instruments, especially the Plan of Action, and we assign the highest priority to its development and to compliance with it.

46. Likewise, within the context of the agreements reached at the Second Summit of the Americas, we express our firm intention to continue strengthening hemispheric institutions, especially through the Organization of American States.

Unilateral measures

47. We support the Declaration adopted at the Eleventh Summit of the Rio Group held in Asunción, in which we expressed our forceful rejection of unilateral and extraterritorial national measures, since they are actions that violate the fundamental principles of law and international coexistence and have a negative impact on cooperation, trade and investment in our countries. These measures include the Helms-Burton Act, recent additional initiatives to expand its reach and certification processes in the effort to combat drug trafficking.

48. We again ratify our firm willingness to maintain a constructive dialogue on this subject and to continue reaching agreements in regional and international forums. Likewise, we are committed to the strengthening of multilateral efforts, aware that extensive, democratic participation in them will uphold the principle of shared responsibility as the criterion for dealing with world problems and strengthening fairness and transparency in international relations.

Joint action to counter the problem of illegal drugs and related crimes

49. The abuse and illegal trafficking of drugs and narcotics and related crimes are a world problem. Actions to prevent, control and punish them are a joint and shared responsibility which requires an integral and balanced focus of efforts together with both national and international strategies. We acknowledge that the pillar of such actions is the concerted effort and cooperation of States.

50. In this regard, we reiterate our firm commitment and political will to seek every means to allow for the full implementation and execution of the tasks and commitments agreed on by our countries during the recent special session in New York of the United Nations General Assembly devoted to countering the world drug problem.

51. We underscore the importance of alternative development and the necessary promotion of socio-economic options for communities adversely affected by illegal crops. In this regard, we acknowledge as fundamental the international community's support for programmes to enable us to make progress in this area.

52. We have instructed our competent authorities, in the spirit of the commitment made at the Second Summit of the Americas and in compliance with the strategy agreed on by the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission, to ensure that we forge an alliance against illegal drugs aimed at establishing a single, objective procedure for multilateral government assessment to follow up the individual and collective progress of all countries involved in the hemispheric effort to deal with the various manifestations of the problem.

53. We express our satisfaction at the holding of the first summit meeting between the Latin American and Caribbean States and the European Union and welcome the establishment of the Mechanism of Coordination and Cooperation against Illegal Drugs established at that meeting.

In this regard, we take note that during the first Special Summit of the Caribbean Forum of the ACP States (CARIFORUM), held in the Dominican Republic in August 1998, the heads of State and Government firmly endorsed the Mechanism and agreed that all CARIFORUM States should participate in it.

54. We express our strongest rejection, in relation to criminal manifestations of the drug problem, of undercover operations which infringe the laws and regulations of third countries as a violation of national sovereignty and of the principle of non-intervention.

Terrorism

55. In reiterating our condemnation of terrorism, which is a threat to peace and security and undermines the full exercise of social and individual rights, we express our repudiation of the recent criminal acts against diplomatic missions in Kenya and the United Republic of Tanzania.

In this regard, we are convinced that any international action to prevent and suppress terrorism should be carried out in full and total compliance with international law.

56. We reaffirm the importance of strengthening solidarity and cooperation to prevent, combat and eradicate terrorism through an increased, sustained promotion of bilateral and multilateral measures, with full respect for the sovereignty and jurisdiction of each State and due observance of the provisions of relevant international instruments.

In that regard, we express our firm will to take the necessary steps as agreed in the Lima Declaration and Plan of Action, and we highlight the importance of the Second Specialized Inter-American Conference, to be held in the Argentine Republic.

The year 2000 computer problem

57. The dawn of the third millennium will bring a change in the digits of dates stored in computer systems, a fact that may have grave consequences in view of the heavy interdependence of information systems.

Accordingly, we support the adoption of measures to prevent and overcome this problem, especially in relation to systems under our own control, thereby creating the conditions to ensure the basic operational capacity of national systems and promoting and supporting relevant actions in the private sector. We will encourage the exchange of know-how and experience to reduce risks and enhance savings in this effort.

* * *

58. We agree to hold the Thirteenth Summit of Heads of State and Government in Mexico in 1999.

59. We, the heads of State and Government meeting in Panama City, express our appreciation and congratulations to the President of the Republic of Panama, Ernesto Pérez Balladares, his Government and the Panamanian people for their hospitality, and for the excellent organization and operation of the Twelfth Summit of the Permanent Mechanism for Consultation and Concerted Political Action (Rio Group).

We also share the joy of the Panamanian people and Government at the progress made in the process of reversion of the Panama Canal from the United States Government to the Republic of Panama. We agree that its imminent completion will crown the historic efforts of the peoples and Governments of Latin America and the Caribbean to affirm the sovereignty of the Panamanian people over this interoceanic waterway.

SIGNED at Panama City on 5 September 1998.

(*Signed*) Hugo **Bánzer Suárez**
President of Bolivia

(*Signed*) Eduardo **Frei Ruiz-Tagle**
President of Chile

(*Signed*) Andrés **Pastrana Arango**
President of Colombia

(*Signed*) Jamil **Mahuad Witt**
President of Ecuador

(*Signed*) Janet **Jagan**
President of Guyana

(*Signed*) Ernesto **Zedillo Ponce de León**
President of Mexico

(*Signed*) Ernesto **Pérez Balladares**
President of Panama

(*Signed*) Raúl **Cubás**
President of Paraguay

(*Signed*) Alberto **Fujimori**
President of Peru

(*Signed*) Rafael **Caldera**
President of Venezuela

(*Signed*) Marco **Maciel**
Vice-President of Brazil

(*Signed*) Guido **Di Tella**
Minister for Foreign Affairs of Argentina

(*Signed*) Didier **Opertti Badán**
Minister for Foreign Affairs of Uruguay

Declaration of the Heads of State and Government of the Rio Group

In view of the recent events that have shaken the international financial markets and whose causes lie outside our region, the heads of State and Government of the Rio Group state:

1. After a decade of structural reforms, the Latin American economies are showing clear signs of strength, as was recognized at the recent meeting of Latin American, United States and Canadian ministers of economic affairs and finance, together with governors and presidents of central banks, with the international financial institutions;

2. Based on the interest of each country and on our common interest, we reaffirm our commitment to continue managing in a responsible manner the economic policy tools that are designed to ensure stability and growth;

3. We are concerned at the possibility that the international financial crisis will continue to worsen, to the point where it could entail the risk of a world recession, which would have a highly negative impact on the economy of the region;

4. We call on the countries in which the international financial crisis originated to take the necessary steps to correct their imbalances;

5. It is essential that the Group of Seven industrialized countries immediately take the necessary steps to restore stability in financial markets and ensure the growth of the world economy;

6. We call on the international financial institutions to become involved more quickly and effectively in solving the international financial crisis;

7. We trust that the adoption of appropriate economic policies and the resolute participation of the developed countries and international financial institutions will overcome the current economic crisis.

Panama City, 5 September 1998